



**City of Santa Barbara
PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

**Special meeting of
THE FRANKLIN NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, August 11, 2010

Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: The Franklin Neighborhood Center Advisory Committee special meeting was called to order by Acting Chairperson Sharon Byrne at 7:00 PM at the Franklin Neighborhood Center, 1136 East Montecito Street, Santa Barbara, CA.

ROLL CALL:

Members Present

Sebastian Aldana
Theresa Peña
Naomi Greene
Sharon Byrne

Members Absent

Ana D. Soto (excused)

Staff Present

Ricardo Venegas, NOS Coordinator II
Elizabeth Stotts, SB Housing & Redevelopment Specialist
Antonio A. Velásquez, NOS Senior Supervisor
Brian Bosse, Housing and Redevelopment Manager
Rick Welch, Building Inspector, City of Santa Barbara
Lieutenant James Pflieger, SB Police Department
SGT. Ed Olsen, SB Police Department

Liaisons Present

Bendy White, Councilman

Guests

Mike Foley, Executive Director, Casa Esperanza
Dr. Edwin Feliciano, Medical Director, SB County ADMHS
Orlando Guerra, East Beach Batting Cages
Alicia Vargas, El Bahio
Evelyn Pineda
John Blomstrand, Fess Parker Doubletree
Bruce Giffin
Rick Feldman
Alan Bleecker, Capital Hardware
Berkeley Johnson
Ed Galsterer
Dale Franciso, Councilman
John O'Neill
Eric Schapel
Bruce Reichard

Peter Beltran
Barbara Schreibke
Paul Gifford, Blue Sands Motel
Jim Dixon, Tri County Produce
Norma Aldana
Eddie Velez
Josie Sutton
Andrew Caruthers
Brent Dheny
Abel González, Diamond Finish Auto
Leona González, Diamond Finish Auto
Rose Aldana
Wallace Shepherd
Josè Vargas
Paul Slater
Rafael Marin
Christine Wong
Christy Calder
David Peterson McDonald's

FNC ADVISORY COMMITTEE INTRODUCTIONS: Sharon Byrne, Acting Chairperson welcomed all to the FNC Advisory Committee Meeting/Community Forum and asked all FNC Advisory Committee members to introduce themselves, followed by members of the panel and public.

INTRODUCTIONS OF AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES: The agency reps included the following:

- Mike Foley, Executive Director, Casa Esperanza
- Lieutenant James Pfleging, SB Police Department
- Brian Bosse, Housing and Redevelopment Manager
- Rick Welch, Building Inspector, City of Santa Barbara
- Elizabeth Stotts, Community Development Program Specialist
- Dr. Edwin Feliciano, Medical Director, SB County ADMHS

READING OF PROBLEM STATEMENT: Sebastian Aldana read the following summary problem statement: Our neighborhood faces a multitude of health & safety issues that are very complex, and very difficult to resolve. These issues represent a serious threat to the safety, security and well-being of our neighborhood. Over the last couple of months, neighborhood residents and business owners have come before the Franklin Neighborhood Center Advisory to voice their concerns over several neighborhood health and safety issues. To familiarize ourselves with the issues, Advisory Committee members conducted outreach to area residents and business owners - it quickly became apparent that issues with drug use/dealing, illegal dumping, youth-on-youth violence, teen suicide, and homeless populations, are among the top concerns. As a starting point to understanding how these issues are being currently addressed - we have invited several agency reps to this evenings' meeting to provide information and directly answer your questions regarding these worrisome problems.

We hope that this meeting will develop a better understanding of the problems being experienced, challenges being encountered towards resolving them, and help us to explore ways in which the neighborhood residents can get involved to assist in finding solutions.

Sharon re-introduced members of the panel and asked each of them to provide a brief presentation on the work that they and/or their agency is currently doing to resolve some of the concerns expressed in the problem statement

INFORMATION PANEL PRESENTATION: Each panel representative provided an overview of the work and programs/services that their agency provides that directly deals with the concerns expressed by the community. Panel participants included: Mike Foley, Executive Director, Casa Esperanza; Lieutenant James Pfleging, SB Police Department; Brian Bosse, City of Santa Barbara Housing and Redevelopment Manager; Rick Welch, Building Inspector, City of Santa Barbara; and Elizabeth Stotts, Community Development Program Specialist. After all panelists provided a brief presentation on current efforts by their respective agencies at resolving issues and concerns highlighted in the problem statement, Acting Chairperson Sharon Byrne, opened up the community forum to questions from the public. Over 60 residents and/or business owners were in attendance. Participants expressed a variety of concerns bearing on graffiti vandalism and violence; however the majority of the concerns or questions were regarding the homeless individuals who are creating a negative and unsafe environment for all.

Elizabeth Stotts is the support staff to the South Coast Advocacy on Homelessness Committee, composed of a 15 member board including 4 elected officials. This committee has been active for 20 years and its main role is to act as an advisory board on issues concerning homelessness in Santa Barbara County. Liz encouraged area residents to get more involved in their community to resolve these concerns by attending the South Coast Advocacy on Homelessness Committee meetings. Liz passed out a sign in roster for residents wishing to receive more information on this committee and the current work that they are doing to resolve the issues relating to homelessness in the county.

Brian Bosse, Housing and Redevelopment Manager, summarized that housing and redevelopment manages redevelopment activities, affordable housing activities, and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The Housing and Redevelopment Division, is the point division for addressing issues relating to homelessness and is also charged with implementing the alternate giving campaign (www.realchangesb.org). Housing and Redevelopment has been working throughout the City to eliminate conditions of blight through capital improvement projects, the provision of affordable housing and CDBG grant programs. Past and current capital improvement projects include areas in the Paseo Nuevo, West Beach sidewalks, and East Cabrillo sidewalks, to name a few. Brian encouraged all too actively participate in their neighborhood by being more involved in committees such as the Franklin Neighborhood Center Advisory Committee, having consistent resident input will go a long way in helping to resolve many of the neighborhood issues.

Rick Welch, Building Inspector spoke of the work that Building and Safety does throughout the City to assist residents in resolving unsafe conditions due to poor property maintenance and/or zoning violations. Building and Safety has received much input from the Franklin Neighborhood Center Advisory Committee and as a result

blighted conditions in many areas have been eliminated. Currently, there are several active code enforcement cases in the neighborhood that will resolve some of the concerns being expressed by residents.

Lt. James Pfleging, SBPD has direct management of the Patrol Division-one of the many divisions within the police department that address various areas of law enforcement services to the community. One of the sections under the Patrol Division is the Tactical Patrol Force which specifically deals with homeless related issues as well as unsavory individuals. The Santa Barbara Police Department has adopted a Restorative Policing Program that addresses some of the underlying issues faced by homeless people by providing these folks with referral and/or information on existing social services that are needed for them to become sober and/or free from drug/alcohol abuse. The program offers alternatives to incarceration and provides the opportunity for individuals to experience long term change. Lieutenant Pfleging emphasized that the community plays a big part in resolving these issues-the police department cannot do it alone-residents need to take an active role by reporting illegal activity to the police department. Lieutenant Pfleging, added that, "If we can get these people to a place where they can stay sober and get treated, we can help resolve the majority of these issues."

Sharon Byrne introduced Mike Foley and added that Casa Esperanza is held in great regard by the community for all the good work that is being done to assist our homeless population. Sharon cautioned everyone to please keep in mind that the main focus of this meeting is to get everybody together to work as a community in resolving a variety of different issues.

Mike Foley, Casa Esperanza's Executive Director, spent five years living and/or working in the neighborhood-he knows what it's like to live in the neighborhood and agreed that some of the homeless are acting out mental health behaviors and unfortunately, these individuals are going untreated due to cuts in mental health services. Casa Esperanza is working very hard to resolve these issues by working with families/individuals that need shelter during the winter months and to assist them in transitioning into permanent/stable housing. However, there are many issues, problems, including environmental elements that must also be addressed. Cabrillo has always been a place where illegal activity such as drug dealing and prostitution has taken place. There are also 31 liquor licenses in the Milpas corridor and that adds to the problem. There also has to be more consistent policing of this area over the long term in order for real change to take place.

Dr. Edwin Feliciano, Medical Director, SB County ADMHS understands the residents frustrations as he too has experienced these issues. Dr. Feliciano indicated that he lives in the neighborhood. Dr. Feliciano is part a mobile crisis intervention team that works very effectively with the various agencies, including Casa Esperanza, Santa Barbara Police Department and other social services to specifically work with homeless individuals that are also in need of mental health services. Dr. Feliciano and the County are committed to assisting and/or providing the existing resources to resolve neighborhood concerns.

After all panel participants provided summaries of the work that is being done by their respective agencies and/or City Departments, Sharon Byrne, Acting Chairperson for FNC Advisory Committee opened the community forum for questions and discussion. After much discussion and questions from the public, all agreed that they no longer see

as much police in the area, especially the bike patrols. Residents were in agreement that consistent policing and more neighborhood involvement would play a major role in resolving problems. Panel participants, Residents and Business offered a variety of possible solutions including:

- More consistent policing, including bike patrols
- A more engaged & organized "Power Base" that can advocate for neighborhood needs.
- Zoning regulations that can assist with mitigation of homeless issues.
- Include existing liquor business in the discussion so that they can work with the neighborhood to adopt stricter liquor sales policies to the chronically inebriated.
- Promoting the active use of Cabrillo Ball Park and/or other existing pocket parks in order to develop a more vibrant and healthy environment at each of the parks- especially Cabrillo Ball Park.
- Capping the number of beds and/or clients served out of Casa Esperanza.
- Relocating Casa Esperanza to a more suitable location.
- Implementing the "Real Change Not Spare Change Campaign."
- Advocating for more services for our mentally ill residents.

Several business owners, including Bruce Reichard, The Habit Restaurant; John Blomstrand, Fess Parker Doubletree; Jim Dixon, Tri County Produce; David Peterson McDonald's; Bruce Giffin, Giffin & Crane Contractors; and Rick Feldman, The Eyeglass Factory, spoke about the negative effect that the homeless population is having on their businesses. All provided anecdotal summaries of ongoing incidents that have caused them to loose clients. All agreed that one of the main improvements and/or solutions would be to have the Santa Barbara Police Department provide additional officers to patrol the area. The bike patrols would provide greater visibility and would go a long way in improving and/or resolving issues of homelessness and criminal activity. Business owners were in agreement that their businesses are suffering-clients, tourists, and neighborhood residents are not coming back to spend at their businesses because of the ongoing harassment of aggressive panhandlers and/or disturbances being caused by homeless individuals.

David Peterson, owner of McDonald's on Milpas, has spent his life savings on improvements to his restaurant. Mr. Peterson indicated that he is losing money and clients due to a variety of problems including homeless individuals acting out negative behaviors and/or loitering inside the restaurant. Graffiti vandalism is also a big problem with the restaurant losing money due to costly repairs. Lt. Pfleging and SGT. Olsen responded that the Police Department has a new graffiti tracking system in place that catalogs the graffiti and has the capability of matching graffiti vandalism to specific individuals. PD divides graffiti vandalism into two different areas; graffiti art and graffiti done for the purposes of promoting gang activity. In either case, PD tries to match the crime to specific vandal and when caught, heavy economic sanctions are imposed.

Pastor Wallace Shepherd, Southern Baptist Church, indicated that they have experienced similar issues with youth in the community. Church members organized and got involved in conducting outreach to local youth in that area and focused on individuals in that area that were tagging and worked with them to assist them in turning things around for themselves.

Cruzito Cruz spoke about providing youth with jobs and opportunities to get them on track and also suggested that the community should consider adopting the Down Town Organization Model to help in resolving some the resident concerns. One of the keys to resolving issues is to include RDA funding to develop an environment that will promote a vibrant community that will actively include youth and the business community. Our youth need jobs and area businesses need to step forward by outreaching to disenfranchised neighborhood youth.

Neighborhood residents continued to express their concern regarding ongoing harassment, aggressive panhandling, trespassing of private property, and complete disregard for the health & safety of the neighborhood by some members of the homeless community. Residents also agreed that a lack of adequate policing was also contributing to the problem. Trader Joes and Burger King have resorted to contracting their own security guards just to deal with the homeless individuals that are causing a nuisance. Many business owners, including owners of "The Habit" requested that the SBPD needs to provide a more consistent police presence, bike patrols will make a huge difference in the neighborhood. Area business is suffering economically, and the overall quality of life for area residents is deteriorating.

Rose Aldana, who owns a home in the neighborhood directly behind Trader Joe's, sees the impact of homelessness in the neighborhood and is directly affected as many homeless individuals congregate behind Trader Joe's. Homeless individuals are trespassing, picking the fruit off her trees, loitering, and defecating in the area. Mrs. Aldana advocated for the downsizing of Casa Esperanza, especially when other cities are eliminating homeless services. Other residents echoed these concerns and agreed with exploring options including downsizing and/or relocation of Casa Esperanza.

Bruce Reichard added that the number of homeless in the area has increased substantially and added that there is a greater number of homeless today than what existed ten years ago. Residents can no longer feel safe walking to the beach because of the fear factor-the community cannot accept nor handle the ongoing increase of homeless in the neighborhood.

One business owner expressed the concern that homeless folks are receiving many services and/or resources, yet many are not showing reciprocal consideration for the health and safety of this neighborhood.

Friar Rafael Marin, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church was in agreement and spoke passionately about the health and safety issues that are related to an increase of homeless people in the neighborhood. The community cannot accept more numbers of homeless in the area, there are serious safety concerns for all of our children-we can no longer leave our church doors open because homeless have vandalized the church and many have violent tendencies. The neighborhood cannot be held hostage to any one group of individuals. Friar Marin urged the panelist and community to work together to provide more than ideas-the neighborhood wants action to resolve all these issues and concerns-especially problems associated with the homeless.

Mr. Foley, added that this area has always been very attractive to the homeless population, even before the homeless shelter was existence. The Milpas corridor is set up to for the homeless to be successful, with many panhandling and using this money

for the purchase of alcohol. "Whose idea was it to have 31 liquor licenses on Milpas?" Foley asked. The community can get more involved by becoming more organized and working together with business owners and the police to bring about real change that will help the homeless back on track.

Councilman Dale Francisco urged area residents and business owners to work together to resolve these issues and recommended that the community better organize themselves to come before City Council to advocate for needed resources such as additional police services, including bike patrols and/or officers that can specifically address these issues. Councilman Francisco added that those who organize and advocate for services tend to receive more needed funding for services and/or resources.

Alan Bleecker, Capital Hardware, suggested that perhaps it was time to bring back the Milpas Merchants Association to work with the Franklin Neighborhood Center Advisory Committee and/or other organizations to develop relationships that will get the community more involved in developing positive experiences that will bring families out into the Milpas business corridor, such as the Annual Christmas Parade. Other residents asked for relocation and/or downsizing of Casa Esperanza. Mr. Foley asked how many area businesses had implemented the "Real Change Not Spare Change" program to which all business owners present acknowledged that they had not. Mr. Foley added that by working together as a united community, we can turn things around and be in a better position to transition homeless population into permanent housing and assist them in securing the needed social services.

Councilman Bendy White added that the active involvement of area residents and the business community is critical to developing solutions to resolving many of the issues including issues of homelessness and gangs. The City has approximately 40% of county the population, yet the City is providing approximately 100% of the services to the homeless population-the county should provide its fair share of services and/or funding to provide support services to the homeless. The Downtown Organization is a great model that perhaps can be adopted by our community to assist with the funding and development of special projects and/or activities in the neighborhood that will address resident concerns and/or issues. Bendy will be sharing the concerns of the business community and residents back to the rest of the City council and will continue to work with the neighborhood to find appropriate solutions.

After much discussion, Sharon Byrne closed the meeting by urging all those present to get more involved in their community by being more vigilant, calling the police to report illegal activity, and by participating in neighborhood activities at the our parks that will in turn create a more vibrant and healthy community.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 9:20 PM, there being no further business to come before the committee, the Franklin Neighborhood Center Advisory Committee meeting was adjourned by Acting Chairperson, Sharon Byrne.

Respectfully submitted,
Ricardo Venegas
Neighborhood and Outreach Services Coordinator II